

Lies Of Our Times

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Nelson Mandela addresses giant rally in Soweto

Reuters / Bettmann Newspictures

Chomsky on
the New Third
World Threat

Black Media
and
the CIA

The Times
Excuses
Apartheid

New: Cockburn's
"Photo
Opportunities"

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Mandela's address to the world censored in America.

The *New York Times* has finally commented on *Lies Of Our Times*. In reply to a query by Michael Powell of *New York Newsday* (April 10, 1990, Part II, p. 9), Managing Editor Joseph Lelyveld said he had never read the magazine. "It's a purely polemical enterprise. Criticism that departs [sic] from the premise that journalists on this or any other newspaper are liars is neither serious nor of value."

This long-time news reporter apparently never learned that you should *look* at a document before describing its aims and content. While we are, to be sure, polemical, and proud of it, in each issue we explain that the "Lies" in *LOOT* are much more than literal falsehoods. It is revealing that Lelyveld was willing to trash *LOOT* without even peeking at it. We are told that photocopies of *LOOT* are furtively circulated around the third-floor editorial offices of the *Times*. Lelyveld's cavalier put-down provides a small piece of evidence that we do have a role to play; never mind his awkward use of "departs from the premise," which creates an amusing ambiguity.

We are pleased to introduce in this issue Alexander Cockburn's new column, "Photo Opportunities," in which he will examine the critical use, misuse, and non-use of important photographs, a significant part of media analysis.

Lies Of Our Times

A Journal to Correct the Record

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To Our Readers

Lies Of Our Times is a magazine of media criticism. "Our Times" are the times we live in but also the words of the *New York Times*, the most cited news medium in the U.S., our paper of record. Our "Lies" are more than literal falsehoods; they encompass subjects that have been ignored, hypocrisies, misleading emphases, and hidden premises—the biases which systematically shape reporting. We can address only a sampling of the universe of media lies and distortions. But, over time, we hope *Lies Of Our Times* will go a long way toward correcting the record.

Alexander Cockburn
with **Richard McKerrow**

Photo Opportunities

If One Picture is Worth a Thousand Words...

Then don't run the picture. It might upset people. Ask yourself how many photographs you saw of the destruction of working-class areas of San Salvador by air strikes from the Salvadoran air force during the rising of the FMLN late last year. Or of the effects of U.S. bombardment of working-class neighborhoods in Panama City. Probably none, despite the fact that there were hundreds of news cameras on hand. Maybe a glimpse on CNN.

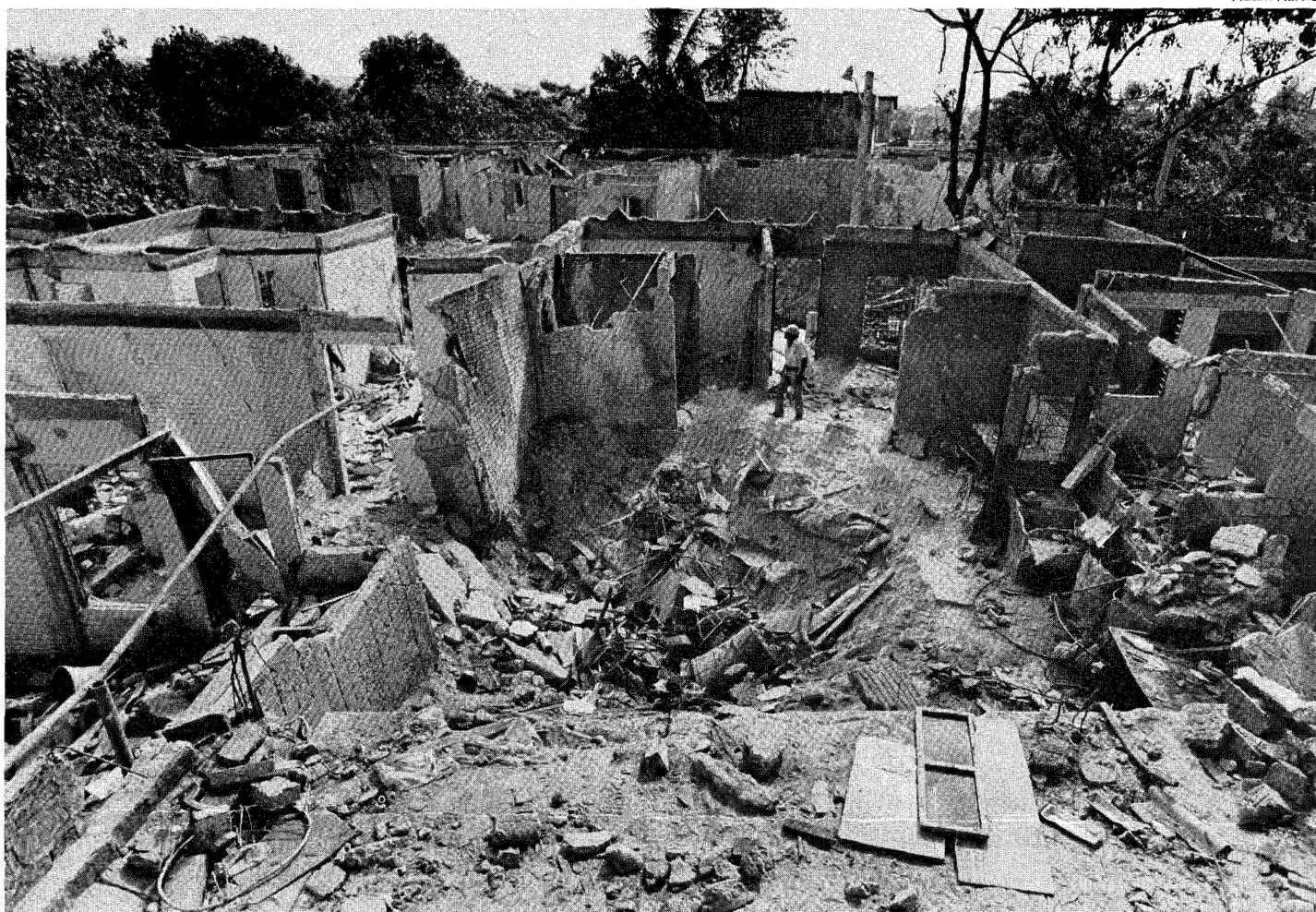
Last December I happened to be chatting with the photographer Adam Kufeld after a public event in San Francisco. Kufeld is publishing a book of photographs about El Salvador

("Portrait of El Salvador," due later this year from W.W. Norton) and showed me the picture below. It was taken at the time of the FMLN uprising, in Soyapango, about ten minutes drive from the center of downtown San Salvador. Kufeld says it was one of four similar craters in a two-block area.

As a test, my associate Richard McKerrow called up the major photo agencies asking for photographs of destruction in working-class neighborhoods in San Salvador in November and December, 1989, and in Chorillos and San Miguel in Panama during the invasion.

From the Associated Press someone responded that for Panama they had "a couple of negatives of unidentified areas" but "classic American press, we didn't cover bombing of working-class neighborhoods." Sipa Press's response for El Salvador was: "That's a very interesting question. I wonder why our photographers didn't send photos of those neighborhoods. I know they were heavily bombed." Gamma Liaison told Rich, "We don't have something specific.... There's no way to ID what kind of neighborhood it was." A woman at Magnum would "have to know the contents of the article before we can send" photographs. She reckoned they had a "couple of shots of rubble from buildings destroyed next to the Panamanian Command Base Center." ●

Adam Kufeld



One and a half million dollars a day in U.S. money helped flatten these houses and kill their occupants, but most U.S. taxpayers did not get the chance to see what their dollars bought.

The *Times* Miscovers the ANC

Dennis A. Mumble

Through decades of brutal repression, the South African apartheid regime has developed its own truth—a truth that consigns the African National Congress and all other anti-apartheid forces to shadowy basements where terrorists and communists plan devious deeds against the law-abiding and god-fearing white master race.

Historically the South African government utilized Cold War rhetoric, gaining tacit support from the West for its world view, which required cloaking the anti-apartheid movement in red flags. With very few exceptions, its western allies and their media were all too eager to accept the apartheid myth and actively helped maintain this structure for almost two generations.

But the explosive growth of the South African liberation movement and its powerful worldwide counterpart elevated the struggle from apartheid's basement to the top floor of international popular legitimacy through sanctions and defiance campaigns.

The subsequent exposure of apartheid rocked the regime to its very foundations. The ANC and other organizations were "unbanned" in a futile attempt to temper their militancy.

In a highly paternalistic fashion, the National Party leader, F.W. de Klerk, has belatedly sought to restore authority by developing a five-year plan to discard the old-style system while retaining its material and political privileges. De Klerk's entire 1989 election platform pivoted on the establishment of this alternative path.

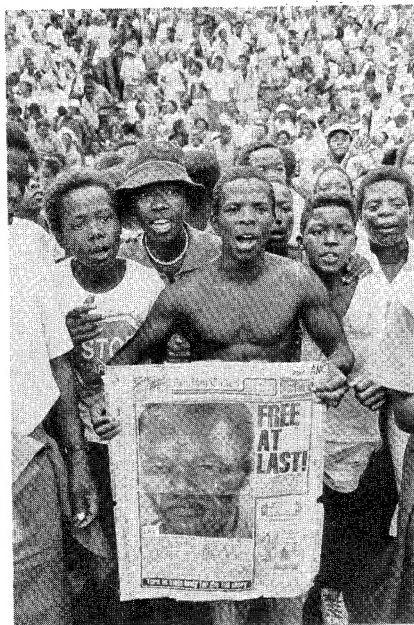
While the reality of a failed system has engulfed the ruling party, this fact has apparently escaped the *New York Times*, which still covers South Africa through the prism of apartheid's view. Journalistic balance and objectivity assume new meanings in the *Times*'s coverage, which considers the apartheid infrastructure (police, army, security personnel, journalists, etc.) as primary sources for information on the rebellion while minimizing exposure to the forces opposing the system.

Anti-apartheid organizations are constantly depicted as eerie and "shadowy" bodies. For example, in "A Hard Road for Mandela" (April 5, 1990, p. A1), Christopher Wren actually quotes the traditionally anti-ANC *Business Day*: "The ANC remains, despite its unbanning, a shadowy organization of uncertain stature and questionable authority."

Another theme that has been constant in Wren's coverage of the ANC is one of perceived deep divisions among its members, at a time when the ANC's unity is at its highest. He constantly harps on divisions between a generation of "impatient" youths and an older generation of leaders out of touch with the ideals of the youth. Every story he has written about the ANC in the

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International Defense and Aid Fund



Residents of Soweto celebrate the release of Nelson Mandela at a rally at Jabulani Stadium.

last year touches on this theme. In a recent article, "Mandela Agrees to Talk With de Klerk on Violence in Townships" (April 3, 1990, p. A10), Wren loses all sense of journalistic responsibility: "The South African press speculated today that the [ANC] had pulled out of the talks because it was unprepared and wracked by internal disagreements." No names, no quotes, no rebuttals from the ANC, which said it had canceled the talks because the police were killing protesters. It should be noted that, editorially, the *Times* was even more scandalous. It said (April 6, 1990, p. A34), "Black politics also was the cause of Mr. Mandela's decision [to postpone the talks]. He was plainly sensitive to the outcry over police killings of black protesters...." Not sensitive to the killing of people, but playing politics, sensitive only to the outcry over the killings.

Wren had reiterated his unsubstantiated claims of internal division the day before, in "A Hard Road For Mandela." In the opening paragraph, he posited that "doubts persist about the readiness of the [ANC] to undertake serious negotiations ... and about Mr. Mandela's ability to consolidate the widest black support." His definitive sources were: "speculation in the press here, as well as among diplomats and politicians." One can easily imagine what press, which diplomats, and which politicians Wren is referring to.

Other *Times* writers also reveal a pattern of vintage kowtowing to and promotion of this National Party propaganda which depicts the ANC as divided and with a soft base of support. John F. Burns's April 1, 1990, article (p. 14), "Understanding de Klerk: Party Man With a Twist," just the latest in a series of flattering profiles on de Klerk, is a deft piece of propaganda. The story is superbly complimentary of de Klerk and his efforts to improve the National Party's image. It is at the same time highly schizophrenic in its characterization of apartheid, commenting that:

Mr. de Klerk's broad formula acknowledges that he considers apartheid a dead-end street and that majority rule in some form is inevitable. But Mr. de Klerk has left

no doubt, either, that he will strive to protect what the five million whites here have built up ... including their property rights.

This is an attempt to rationalize the machinations of the regime by posing a two-sentence contradiction. On the one hand it is intended to convey the complexity of emotions within the regime — a subliminal appeal for time to allow it to clarify its position. And on the other, it conveys a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of apartheid, which is, first and foremost, a system for the accumulation of wealth buttressed by the ideology of white supremacy, leading to staggering inequalities of wealth and power. The two are not separable, as the passage would suggest.

Dropping overt white supremacist themes has struck a sympathetic chord at the *Times*, which has been meticulously crafting an image of de Klerk as the reluctant administrator caught between two widely divergent poles, with the ANC on the left and the white conservatives on the right. This white-knight theme is taken even further by Burns, who says it is de Klerk's "profound religious commitment to ideals of justice that sets him apart from his predecessors" and juxtaposes his position against that of Nelson Mandela and the anti-apartheid movement:

While Nelson Mandela and other black leaders have said that Mr. de Klerk's vision appears to encompass limitations on black political authority that they could not accept, many South Africans who favor far-reaching political change say they believe that the real hope for the future may lie not in Mr. de Klerk's current pronouncements but in his probing, pragmatic cast of mind and instinct for reaching out for new solutions.

The phrasing puts the ANC in the position of extremists asking for too much, too soon; and de Klerk as the religious man of justice, seeking the best practical route. It is lost on the *Times* that the real threat to peace in South Africa is any pragmatism that requires — in whatever form — the continuation of apartheid and its intolerable injustices. The passage also creates a strange division between "Nelson Mandela and other black leaders" on the one hand and "many South Africans who favor ... change" on the other. If these unnamed "many" are from the white minority, that is one thing; but if they are black, the statement is simply untrue.

In "African Congress Faulted on Unrest" (March 9, 1990, p. A3), Wren featured numerous statements by South African government officials blaming the ANC for "orchestrating the rising violence" in South Africa's ethnic communities. A terse denial from the ANC is buried in the story. Indeed, Wren tends to accept government assertions of innocence at face value. In "South Africa Sends Army to Halt Strife" (April 4, 1990, p. A10), he says that "much of the violence that has erupted in the last two months has not directly involved government repression, but fighting between rival black factions." He notes that "South African police have denied that officers have taken sides in the conflict" and states that Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, the leader of the anti-ANC Inkatha, had charged that the police were — of all things — siding with the pro-ANC United

Democratic Front in the violent clashes in Natal province. Wren never mentions the South African Council of Churches report ("Statement on Ad Hoc Crisis Meeting," March 29, 1990) describing eyewitness testimony that the police were throwing boxes of ammunition over the sides of their trucks to Inkatha fighters in Pietermaritzburg. Even in an editorial, the *Times* has called the fighting "a virtual civil war rag[ing] between black factions" (April 6, 1990, p. A34), with no mention of police participation. Yet the *Washington Post's* Allister Sparks was able to meet with independent monitors of the violence and report their observation that "the police have openly colluded with Inkatha" ("Natal's 'Valley of Death' Goes to War," April 8, 1990, pp. A29, A35).

From this brief review of the *Times's* coverage of the ANC and the anti-apartheid movement generally, it appears quite clear that the paper has very little consideration for those opposing the system. It considers the custodians of apartheid sufficiently acceptable to work closely with them and to promote their new, softer image. This was also evident in its benign treatment of the apartheid election in which the great majority of the population was not permitted to vote.

The liberation of South Africans from apartheid cannot be achieved by the creators of that system. That was made clear in de Klerk's remarks to Parliament April 17. Wren's article on the speech, with the wildly misleading headline "De Klerk Endorses Sharing of Power," and the subhead "But South African President is Adamant in Opposing Domination by Blacks" (April 18, 1990, p. A5), opens: "President F.W. de Klerk said today that his government would not agree to majority rule...." (Other papers have more honest headline writers; the same day's *Washington Post* (p. A1) said: "De Klerk Rejects Majority Rule," with the subhead "Detail Offered on 'Power Sharing'; Plan Seen Unacceptable to Blacks"; the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (p. 2) said: "De Klerk Rejects Rule by Majority.") So much, incidentally, for Burns's statement two weeks earlier that de Klerk acknowledges "majority rule in some form is inevitable."

To suggest, as the *Times* continually does, that de Klerk be highly rewarded for being less repressive than his predecessors is to fail or refuse to grasp the fundamental implications of the continuing absolute economic, political, and social domination of the majority by the minority, which is apartheid. ●

Wide World Photos



Nelson Mandela addresses a crowd of half a million in Port Elizabeth, April 1. The *Times* calls this a divided movement.

Dressing Down Ralph Lauren and the *Times*

Eric Wakin

An article by Patricia Leigh Brown, "Safari Woman: Lauren's Wink at the Wild Side," (*New York Times*, February 8, 1990, p. B1) lauding Ralph Lauren's new line of clothing and home furnishings, the "Safari collection," demonstrates that even the Arts pages of the *Times* serve to apologize for racism and colonialism. Lauren's ad campaign, with little critical examination by Brown, demonstrates a romanticized and degrading interpretation of colonial Africa even as Nelson Mandela is released from prison and the struggle against racist oppression enters a new phase.

Brown quotes a Lauren public-relations flack early in the article: The Safari collection is a "fantasy of what colonial life might have been like, as interpreted by modern times." Both the Safari collection of clothing, perfume, furnishings, etc., and Brown's article support an insidious revisionism that omits any mention of black Africans and reduces white rule to its clothing and bedsheets. Were it not so insensitive to the hundreds of millions of Africans who have suffered and continue to suffer under white rule, it would be ludicrous.

The tone of the article is set by the lead: "Ralph Lauren has never been to Africa. 'Sometimes it's better if you haven't been there,' he said." This might have prompted skepticism from a more enterprising journalist; unfortunately, Brown only offers up pathetic metaphors ("deep in the heart of darkness that is Seventh Avenue") to parrot Lauren's "wasn't-colonialism-grand" line.

Lauren says, "I believe that a lot of wonderful things are disappearing from the present, and we have to take care of them." Exactly what wonderful things are disappearing? Racism? Oppression? Exploitation?

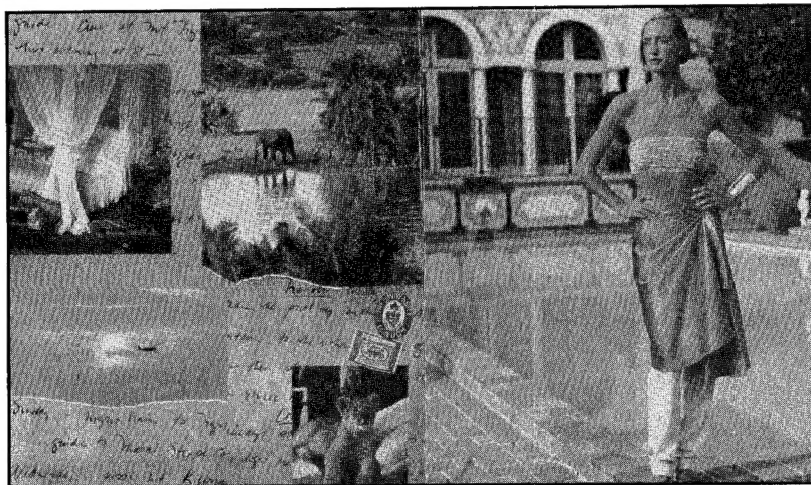
As Brown interprets the Safari collection: "To Mr. Lauren, it is not a vision of the Great White Hunter or even of Africa, but of an endangered species: the kind of woman who picnics with her silver tea service on the Serengeti Plains." She goes on to enumerate the trappings that make up the collection: com-

forters, crystal, clothing, and so on. There are no indigenous Africans in these pictures, or "movies," as Lauren likes to describe the multipage color spreads, featured in the *New York Times Magazine* every Sunday. This is natural, because black Africans certainly were not having tea on the veldt. They were doing the portering, the old-fashioned way of going on safari.

How does Lauren justify evoking the life style of this dying breed to sell clothes? "I think people are more appreciative of the environment now. But there's living in an elegant way, which I've always believed in," he continues. "There have been people who always cared about the environment, but that doesn't mean they live in a shack. They live in a world they've earned, that they've worked for, that they deserve."

Given Brown's obtuseness in the face of the collection's obvious overtones, her insights into Lauren's place as preservationist in the fashion world are unsurprisingly shallow: "If his new Safari collection smacks of bwana style, of Rhodesia rather than Zimbabwe, those references, on the designer's part, seem subconscious. Mr. Lauren is adept at skimming the surface of questionable social milieus, eliminating political and social content while subliminally playing on it."

This collection is an acknowledged "fantasy" from a designer who says people need to be told how to live, and reintroduces the modern version of an all-but-extinct life form. There is nothing subliminal or subconscious about it. The buzzwords and phrases used by Lauren—the "vintageness," the "way of building a new life," and the breeding and background of his Safari women—are as calculated as any marketing strategy from a company as large as Polo/Ralph Lauren, Inc., which has more than \$2 billion yearly in worldwide retail sales. The Safari collection is, as Brown de-



scribes it, "the company's most ambitious introduction to date, an all-out marketing assault." Indeed, the Safari advertising campaign is budgeted at about \$20 million, including sizable advertising fees to the *New York Times* for multiple pages in the Sunday *Magazine* and *Home Design* sections. The 11-page color spread in the March 11 *Magazine*, for example, two pages of which are shown here, cost an estimated \$350,000. A spokeswoman there confirmed that Lauren is "one of our biggest advertisers." Brown's puff piece, as well as a flattering profile of Kim Nye, the Safari model (Woody Hochswender, "Patterns," April 3, 1990, p. B7), should be viewed in this light.

The Safari collection and the safari ideal that Mr. Lauren has created seem not more Rhodesia than Zimbabwe, as Brown suggests, but rather more white-ruled South Africa than free South Africa. Of course, Lauren would not be able to sell very many products if he had more truthfully titled his new collection "Aryan Life" or "Colony."

Eric Wakin is a graduate student in political science at the University of Michigan.

Hiding South Africa's Role in Mozambique

Edward S. Herman

In an editorial, "Killing Fields of Mozambique" (April 23, 1988, p. A30), the *New York Times* discussed a report by Robert Gersony, "Summary of Mozambican Refugee Accounts of Principally Conflict-Related Experience in Mozambique," produced by the U.S. State Department Bureau of Refugees, describing mass killings by the South African proxy, Renamo. Although it denounced Renamo, the *Times* provided balance by asserting that "100,000 people have been massacred in Mozambique—mainly by Renamo ..." (emphasis added). In fact, the report "conservatively estimated that 100,000 civilians may have been murdered by Renamo" (p. 25, emphasis added), not "mainly by Renamo," and the report only addressed killings by Renamo in the years 1986-88.

The editorial pointed to South Africa's sponsorship of and aid to Renamo and closed with the statement: "But surely more can be said about Pretoria's complicity. Why not another report exposing South Africa's real hand in Mozambique?" In fact, only a few months before this editorial, three young white South Africans, Derek and Trish Hanekom, and Roland Hunter, who was formerly the special assistant to Colonel Cornelius Van Niekerk, a senior officer of the South African Directorate of Special Tasks, were released from prison and broke the story on South Africa's support of Renamo with a mass of top-secret documents. Their evidence on "Operation Mila," the code name for the program of covert support of Renamo, "detailed, down to minutiae, the full extent of South Africa's destabilisation of its neighbours" (Howard Burrell, "South Africa in the Dock: Spies Provide Convincing Proof of South Africa's Destabilisation Strategy," *New Africa*, February 1988, pp. 9-10). The evidence provided by these South Africans was never disclosed in the *New York Times*.

Equally striking, in March 1989, Dr. William Minter published "The Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) as Described by Ex-Participants," a report sponsored by the Ford Foundation and the Swedish International Development Agency. It also contained considerable detail on South African participation in Renamo activities in violation of the Nktoni agreements brokered by the western powers. This report was never mentioned in the *New York Times* either, nor was Minter's more recent study of Savimbi ("The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) As Described by Ex-Participants and Foreign Visitors"), which includes important materials on South Africa's involvement in UNITA's activities.

How do we explain the editorial on the killing fields as well as the failure to find South African sponsorship of Renamo newsworthy (despite the closing lines of the editorial)? The editorial was a minimal response to the State Department's own report and estimate of 100,000 murders by Renamo in a period of less than three years, although the *Times* misrepresented the

report's content. However, the overall *Times* editorial stance has been supportive of U.S. policy toward South Africa, a policy which has treated South Africa as a regrettably deviant ally, commanding basic support but needing occasional nudges, i.e., "constructive engagement." Attention to South African sponsorship of Renamo and other violations of human rights and international law anywhere close to proportional to the number of civilian victims would suggest, contrary to the U.S. and *Times* policy, that South Africa is a world class terrorist state. The *Times*'s editorials and news emphases make it unlikely that such inferences will be drawn by readers. The editorialist who wrote of the need for more attention to South Africa's involvement in Mozambique presumably got carried away and indulged in wishful thinking that contradicted actual news policy. ●

The 1981 Invasion of Angola

When the South African government invaded Angola in August 1981 under "Operation Protea," the newly installed Reagan administration engaged in steady apologetics for this aggression and vetoed its condemnation in the U.N. Security Council. The *Times* expressed editorial disagreements with the new policy of "constructive engagement," but its news columns served the Reagan policy and the apartheid regime well.

First, it did not even mention the invasion (which began on August 25) until five days later, on August 30. Second, its opening news article, "South Africans Say 240 Angolans Died in 5-Day Incursion," expressed the news in terms of what South African officials said, not its victims. "Incursion" is a relatively benign word that suggests a modest and temporary intrusion. The reliance on South African sources is characteristic, and 87 percent of the *Times* sources on the "incursion" were South African and U.S. officials (based on a careful study of the coverage by Annenberg School graduate student Karin Wilkins).

Third, the *Times* virtually suppressed the fact that the Reagan administration vetoed condemnation of the invasion in the U.N. Fourth, the *Times* not only gave no voice to the Angolan authorities, but the terrible brutalization of the Angolan people was suppressed. There were no on-the-spot reports of the killings, scorched-earth policies, and human agony of these "unworthy" victims. Fifth, there was periodic reference to the Soviet presence in Angola—Soviet arms captured, two Soviet women killed, South African and official U.S. statements that this is a defensive action against a Soviet-supported state—that justified the attack in familiar Cold War language. (CBS News was even more egregious in using this tactic; an enormous 21 percent of its total news coverage of the region in this period mentioned the assistance and presence of the Soviets in Angola.) Finally, the *Times* quickly dropped the story, so that South Africa could go about its business without any obstruction from an aroused U.S. public that excessive attention might entail.

Covering Africa

Jane Hunter

Friday the 13th of April. It was the *New York Times's* bad luck that, as its presses printed a pro forma offering on Zaire—"Simple Request by Zaire's Leader Spurs Troubling Torrent by Critics" (April 14, 1990, p. 1)—the BBC was reporting that foreigners were leaving Zaire in droves in advance of demonstrations called for the following days. Of course it might be said that the *Times's* "luck" had less to do with astral alignment than its own inability, where Africa is concerned, to get the story right.

The piece on Zaire was written—or perhaps edited—in a bubble of oblivion. Reporter Kenneth B. Noble told of the massive, hostile response to President Mobutu Sese Seko's call for public input. He suggested that Mobutu's initiative had let a genie out of the bottle but failed to mention that the same genie has been raging through Africa for months now, demanding political reform.

Noble outlined the situation in a March 3, 1990, report on anti-government demonstrations in Cote d'Ivoire: "Perhaps not since the time of independence 30 years ago have so many African nations been swept up in protests, strikes and political activity," he wrote ("Clashes and Unrest Grow Fiercer in Ivory Coast," p. A3). He attributed this to "discontent with one-party rule and dire economic conditions" along with the events in Eastern Europe.

The *Times* has devoted several pages a day to the minutiae filed by the reporters it has sent to each East Bloc capital. There is only Noble to cover more than twice as many African nations. He has his hands full in Cote d'Ivoire, where activists, inspired by the ease with which their European counterparts brought down long-reigning governments, have intensified their insurrection. [On April 19, after this article was filed, another Noble report on Cote d'Ivoire appeared in the back pages of the *Times*, with the same deficiencies as noted above.]

Meanwhile, people are in the streets demanding change in Gabon, Niger, Benin, Kenya, and Algeria. A guerrilla movement in northern Liberia has won widespread local support—and brought U.S. advisers in to help the government. There are moves toward pluralism in a number of other African nations as well. Yet, for the *Times* (and much of the rest of the U.S. media) it is like the proverbial tree falling, unattended, in the forest.

Perhaps the *Times* takes its cue from the administration. At a State Department April 13 briefing, broadcast on C-SPAN, a reporter asked, "are we sympathetic" to the demands for pluralism in Gabon and Cote d'Ivoire? "Our support for multiparty democracy is clear," spokesman Richard Boucher replied, but, when pressed, he said, "I frankly don't think we'll want to insert ourselves into the specific situations in those countries."

While it has reported extensively on the high living of fallen East Bloc leaders, the *Times* is reticent about the corruption of African autocrats that has sparked many of the demands for pluralism. Of course, some of these despots have had U.S. support for years precisely because, as was Mobutu, they were willing—for a price—to act against the interests of their compatriots.

Kenneth Noble's African sources are unlikely to offer such an analysis. They are almost exclusively the *Times's* usual "western diplomats" and businessmen, for whom the suffering of everyday people, exacerbated in recent years by the interest payments and austerity measures mandated by the U.S.-dominated International Monetary Fund, is at best an abstraction.

Somehow, the *Times* never quotes those businessmen (a majority of those recently interviewed in three West African nations by this writer) who say that, along with debt relief, there must be minimum price levels for the commodities exports to industrial nations on which African economies survive.

The *Times's* coverage of Africa also reflects the habitual racism of those who run this country. Africa just does not matter, especially since it is no longer a theater of the Cold War. Congress seems content to turn loose the CIA on Angola. Only the Congressional Black Caucus advocates increasing aid for Africa.

In an interview on CNN in early April, Jesse Jackson contended that the U.S. media would never have covered an important change of government in Europe the way it covered Namibia's recent transition to independence. Instead of focusing on the doings of Secretary of State James Baker, Jackson maintained, a "caring," "sensitive" press would have provided a "much more critical" analysis of how South Africa had left Namibia "still trapped in a classic and painful economic colonialism."

What, if not racism, inspires the most frequent fare the *Times* and its imitators offer on Africa—those sweeping presentations featuring famine, desertification, AIDS, political failure, violence, population "explosion"? Even when meant to evoke sympathy, these pieces promote otherness. "How could 'real' human beings tolerate such adversity?" the reader wonders. Unlike their Eastern European counterparts, the real human beings fighting for change in Africa seldom appear in such stories to explain, to accuse.

Wide World Photos



Riot police arresting women protesting the jailing of 127 university professors in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire.

Jane Hunter is the editor of *Israeli Foreign Affairs*, P.O. Box 19580, Sacramento, CA 95819.

Letter From Lexington

April 15, 1990

Dear LOOT,

A principle familiar to propagandists is that the doctrines to be instilled in the target audience should not be articulated; that would only expose them to reflection, inquiry, and, very likely, ridicule. The proper procedure is to drill them home by constantly presupposing them, so that they become the very condition for discourse. The technique is illustrated nicely in Michael Gordon's front-page *New York Times News of the Week in Review* story April 8, headlined "Greater Threats from Lesser Powers: The Middle East's Awful Arms Race."

The opening sentence sets the framework: "With the Soviet military threat receding, the spread of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons to the third world is fast emerging as the greatest danger to stability in the world." The statement presupposes what we are to understand as a truism: In the past the Soviet military threat has been the greatest danger to "stability" (a good thing). Now, we are informed, advanced weaponry in the Third World is replacing it.

Crucially, U.S. power never endangered "stability": for example, the resort to direct aggression, subversion, economic warfare, and international terrorism in Indochina, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Nicaragua, and a few other places that come to mind. Chile under Allende was an enemy, and therefore not "stable," by definition. Accordingly, there is no self-contradiction when James Chace explains in the *New York Times Magazine* that "our efforts to destabilize a freely elected Marxist government in Chile" illustrate the Nixon-Kissinger efforts "to seek stability" ("How 'Moral' Can We Get?" May 22, 1977).

The fundamental principles are not asserted, rather presupposed. They set the terms for thinkable thought.

The basic doctrine is that the state can do no wrong (apart from tactical misjudgment, an excess of benevolence, personal failings, and the like); it is the enemies of the state who are fundamentally evil. A corollary is that U.S. clients are at least on the side of the angels, though sometimes flawed (when they disobey orders).

The corollary is illustrated as Gordon proceeds to review the dangers to "stability" in the Third World. In order of importance, these are: missile launchers in Iraq that place Israel under threat; a Libyan capacity to refuel its bombers in flight; an Iraqi threat to wipe out half of Israel if Israel launches a "preemptive strike" (i.e., in response to Israeli aggression); an Iraqi program to develop nuclear weapons within five to ten years (according to Leonard Spector of the Carnegie Endowment); Iranian chemical weapons; Syrian chemical weapons and nerve gas; Libyan chemical weapons; Saudi Arabian medium-range missiles; an Egyptian missile project.

In paragraph 17 we reach the final example: "Israel is believed to have a small but potent arsenal of nuclear weapons," as well as missiles that will reach all the Arab states (in fact, the

southern U.S.S.R. as well).

So it is the Muslim world that is responsible for "The Middle East's Awful Arms Race." The proliferation threat is becoming "awful" now, not 30 years ago when France helped Israel build its Dimona nuclear reactor and, in violation of its pledge, Israel began to use heavy water provided by Norway, and later the United States, to produce nuclear weapons there. Similarly, the threat to peace is Iraq's effort to obtain high-speed switches to trigger nuclear bombs, not the smuggling of the same devices to Israel years earlier by Los Angeles businessman Richard Smyth, who was indicted on this charge in May 1985, and vanished. Also unthreatening, hence unmentioned here, are the CIA disclosures in 1968 that Israel was producing nuclear weapons and the current estimates that Israel has 100 to 200 advanced fission weapons and may be adding ten a year as well as producing the ingredients for thermonuclear weapons. Meanwhile, Israel refuses international inspection, and Washington (like Norway) does not exercise its right to inspect and retrieve the heavy water (and with it, the nuclear weapons illegally produced). Gordon mentions the problem posed by greedy business concerns in Western Europe which sell poison-gas ingredients and missile technology to the Arab states and Iran, but misses the efforts by U.S. manufacturers to sell Israel supercomputers that can be used for developing nuclear weapons and long-range delivery systems, along with such relevant matters as the Israeli-South African production and testing for many years.

"We thought the Israeli bomb was aimed at the Americans."

No less interesting is the failure to mention, here or ever, the reasons why Israel has produced nuclear weapons from 1959 with the aid of France and, indirectly, the U.S. and Norway. The responsible French official was Francis Perrin, high commissioner of the French atomic energy agency from 1951 through 1970. He informed the *London Sunday Times* (October 12, 1986) that, "We thought the Israeli bomb was aimed at the Americans, not to launch it against America but to say 'if you don't want to help us in a critical situation we will require you to help us, otherwise we will use our nuclear bombs.'" This strategic conception, which can be traced to the mid-1950s, might be of interest to the citizens of the United States, which provides Israel with its high-tech (including nuclear) military capacity while blocking a diplomatic settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as it has been doing for the past 20 years in virtual international isolation. Such matters are taboo, though an assiduous reader can piece bits of the story together from occasional reports.

Also undiscussed is the possible connection between these developments of the past 30 years and the "Greater Threat From Lesser Powers" that is now so ominous. Thus Iraq's possible future threat to Israel arouses great concern but not Israel's longstanding nuclear threat against the entire Arab world, while it joins with the U.S. in barring a political settlement.

The *Times* has been particularly solicitous in protecting the leading U.S. client state from scrutiny on these (and other) matters. Thus, while Gordon quotes Leonard Spector on the danger

that Iraq might obtain nuclear weapons, his warnings over the past years have been treated quite differently.

In 1984, Spector's Carnegie Foundation study of nuclear proliferation identified Israel as "by far the most advanced of eight 'emerging' nuclear powers, surpassing the nuclear capabilities of earlier contenders such as India and South Africa," the *Los Angeles Times* and *Boston Globe* reported. The *Globe* headline (October 31, 1984) read: "Israel May Have 20 Nuclear Bombs, Report Says." The *New York Times* report by Richard Halloran the same day was headlined "Nuclear Arms Races in Third World Feared." It mentioned Israel once, namely, in having helped to reduce the danger of nuclear proliferation by bombing the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981. Spector's 1987 study on nuclear proliferation was reported in the *Boston Globe* (February 25, 1987) on page 67, in the Amusements section, under the headline "Report Says Israel Could 'Level' Cities," quoting him saying that Israel may have acquired enough nuclear weaponry "to level every urban center in the Middle East with a population of more than 100,000." The *New York Times* report by Michael Gordon the same day made no mention of Israel. It opened by warning of Libyan efforts to acquire a nuclear capacity, then turned to suppositions about Pakistan, Iran, and India.

When the *London Sunday Times* released Mordechai Vanunu's remarkable testimony on Israel's nuclear arsenal in 1986, the *New York Times* looked the other way, eliminating a brief wire-service report from its national edition and publishing a few words the next day on Israel's denial of the charges, downplaying the story. Other journals were hardly different, in sharp contrast with European and specialist circles with genuine concern over proliferation. Vanunu's abduction by Israeli intelligence and his secret trial also received little notice.

The *Times* editors are surely aware of what is being ignored. Thus an Op-Ed piece by Spector (March 17, 1988) noted that the media have been "surprisingly uncurious" about the Israeli nuclear threat, even after ample evidence had appeared on Israel's nuclear forces and its testing of a nuclear-capable missile with range sufficient to "reach the Soviet Union." He noted further that not a single question was raised to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir about this matter at a recent press conference in Washington and during TV interviews. The practice largely continues, however, most notably in the newspaper of record.

The second major threat that Gordon cites, right after Iraq's potential threat to Israel in years to come, is Libya's capability

to refuel bombers in flight. Not a threat, in contrast, is the U.S. ability to do the same, employed in the terrorist attack against Libya in 1986 on fraudulent pretexts, with dozens of civilians murdered and a most impressive media coverup that continues today. Also not a threat is Israel's in-flight refueling capability, which it had used to bomb Tunis six months earlier, killing 75 people with smart bombs that tore them to shreds beyond recognition, among other horrors described by Israeli journalist Amnon Kapeliouk on the scene but unreported here. Washington cooperated by failing to warn its ally Tunisia that the bombers were on their way, while, the press reported, George Shultz informed Israeli Foreign Minister Shamir that the U.S. administration "had considerable sympathy for the Israeli action," only drawing back from this open approval when the U.N. Security Council unanimously denounced the bombing as an "act of armed aggression" (the U.S. abstaining). A few days later Prime Minister Shimon Peres was welcomed to Washington as a man of peace, and the media solemnly reported his discussions with his fellow pacifist Ronald Reagan on "the evil scourge of terrorism."

The U.S.-Israel refueling capacity contributes to "stability" and constitutes no threat to peace.

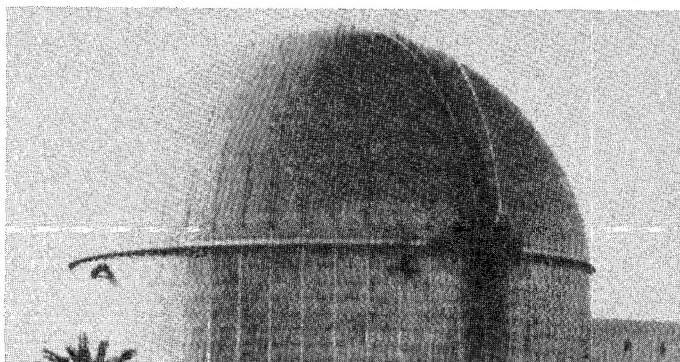
Is it really a sheer coincidence?

Perhaps the most interesting omission is the most obvious one. Is it really a sheer coincidence that Third World proliferation should suddenly emerge as a major threat to our existence just at the moment when it is no longer possible to appeal to the Soviet threat as a pretext for intervention abroad and maintaining the public subsidy to high technology through the military system at home? A journalist interested in pursuing this intriguing question might turn, for example, to the Bush administration's presentation of its national security strategy to Congress on March 20, which identified the Third World as the primary locus for potential combat and as the major threat to U.S. interests, replacing the Soviet threat to Central Europe. In particular, the report stated, "The growing technological sophistication of Third World conflicts will place serious demands on our forces" (Associated Press, March 21, 1990).

In short, we reluctantly concede that the Russians have departed, taking with them the familiar device to frighten and mobilize the U.S. public. But we still need huge military forces, targeting the Third World, which has always been the real enemy, as the actual events of the Cold War reveal clearly enough. Furthermore, because of the heights of technological sophistication being achieved by Third World powers (not without our aid), we still need a high-tech military, including Stealth aircraft to bomb undefended open fields in Panama, SDI to protect us from Iraqi nukes, etc. Thankfully, there will still be lots of business for the electronics industry. The other major threat of the day, drugs, also happens to provide a pretext for intervention abroad and repression of the internal Third World at home—fortuitously, no doubt. Some hypotheses come to mind, but they are not, and are not likely to be, pursued with great vigor.

Noam Chomsky

London Sunday Times



Israeli nuclear facility at Dimona.

The *Times's* Relentless Assaults on Cuba

Debra Evenson

The *New York Times* has embarked on yet another propaganda campaign of intense, negative-image-making on Cuba. A crucial element of what have become relentless, almost daily attacks against Cuba is the absence of any need for a news peg. The disparaging stories are self-generated by the paper and its reporters, while genuine news stories are minimized or ignored (see below).

Thus the *Times* gave front-page coverage on February 20, 1990, to the opinions of Miami-based Cubans speculating on the isolation of Castro and his prospective downfall (David Pitt, "Dreaming of an End to Castro, Cubans in Miami Are Abuzz"). But just a month earlier, the *Times's* failure to adhere even to conventional news values in covering Cuba was dramatically illustrated by their stories on the U.S. Coast Guard attack on a Cuban freighter in international waters. On the morning of January 31, a Coast Guard cutter opened fire on an unarmed Cuban cargo ship off the coast of Mexico. The U.S. claimed the firing was justified because the Cuban crew refused them permission to board and search for drugs. The U.S. alleged that the ship, making its regular cargo run from Moa, Cuba, to Tampico, Mexico, fit the profile of a drug-running boat. Although the vessel was damaged in the attack, it managed to arrive safely in

Mexican waters, where it was escorted to port by the Mexican authorities and subjected to a thorough search with permission of the Cubans. No trace of drugs was found.

The first, small *Times* report of this provocation appeared on February 2, 1990, on page A14, with virtually no details of events leading up to the attack. Indeed, nowhere in either its initial or follow-up story (February 3, 1990, p. A8) does the *Times* mention that the U.S. had communicated its intention to board and search the ship eight hours *before* it opened fire on it, nor that the Cuban government had replied that while it would not permit the Coast Guard to board in international waters, Cuba was willing to submit the ship to search by Mexican authorities upon arrival in Tampico, a reasonable alternative to avoid confrontation. Both Reuters and UPI (January 31 and February 1, 1990), but not the *Times*, reported that there were at least two exchanges of communications between the Cuban Foreign Ministry and U.S. officials through diplomatic channels before the Coast Guard opened fire, supporting the Cuban allegation that this was a deliberately hostile maneuver.

The *Times's* lead paragraph on February 3 mentions the suspicion of drug-running as an excuse, but the reader does not learn until paragraph six that the Mexican officials found none. Moreover, the title of the article, "Cuba Accuses U.S. of Firing on Freighter," implies that there is some question whether the shooting, which the U.S. admitted, even occurred.

This kind of military confrontation ought to have provided the basis for dramatic front-page coverage, but the *Times* relegated it to five inches at the bottom of page 14. Why should this hard news get buried and the wishful thinking of exiles in Miami get page one?

—With Edward S. Herman and Ellen Ray

Headlines and Omissions

There were 28 news articles dealing with Cuba in the *New York Times* from March 1 to April 15. Many of them contain headlines with extremely biased language. Here is a sampling (*our emphases*):

"Havana Journal: When Castro Talks, the Generation Gap Yawns" (Howard French, April 13, 1990, p. 4A).

"Castro *Unbending* on Cuba's Future" (French, April 5, 1990, p. 5A).

"Is Castro Planning *Another Mock Trial*?" (Herberto Padilla and Belkis Cuza Male, Op-Ed, March 27, 1990, p. A27).

"Castro *Piqued*, Says Quayle is 'a Dandy'" (Reuters, March 24, 1990, p. A14).

"*Setback* for the Cubans Benefits the Dominicans" (March 19, 1990, p. D11).

"Soviet Press *Snaps Back* at Castro, Painting an *Outdated Police State*" (Bill Keller, March 8, 1990, p. A1).

"Rights Panel *Scolds* Cuba, Not China" (Paul Lewis, March 7, 1990, p. A3).

"A Writer in Castro's *Stifling Shadow*" (Herbert Mitgang, March 3, 1990, p. A14).

Further compelling evidence of bias can be found from a sampling of news about Cuba which the *Times* chose to ignore:

- The Rio Group of eight Latin American countries denounced TV Martí as a violation of international law (InterPress Service, April 2, 1990).

- The U.N. International Telecommunications Union found that TV Martí violates both the letter and the spirit of international telecommunications agreements (InterPress Service, April 3, 1990).

- The Ecuadorean parliament condemned TV Martí as a violation of international law and demanded its immediate suspension (InterPress Service, April 4, 1990).

- The Labour Party in Britain denounced the Thatcher government for failing to condemn TV Martí (Press Association Newsfile, April 4, 1990).

- The Mexican congress unanimously condemned TV Martí and the shelling of the Cuban cargo ship off Mexican territorial waters (InterPress Service, April 6, 1990).

Cuban-Soviet relations merited the negative page-one story on March 8; these items were totally ignored:

- Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze said at an April 6 press conference in Washington: "As regards the situation in Cuba, I do not perceive any problems that may cause concern, as I know the situation in this country is normal, stable, they have their own plans, they have their own view of the world, and we wish them well. We wish them success in the realization of those plans" (Federal Information Systems Corp., April 6, 1990).

- Hundreds of Soviet children suffering effects of the Chernobyl disaster began arriving in Havana on March 30 for specialized treatment at Cuban hospitals. Cuba is also providing treatment for victims of the Armenian earthquake (InterPress Service, April 2, 1990).

- Cuba and the Soviet Union signed a trade protocol worth \$14.7 billion for 1990, representing an 8.7 percent *increase* over 1989 (Reuters, April 17, 1990).

It should be noted that in the same period, the *Times* ran only nine items on El Salvador, none of which used any invidious wording in a headline, and included a favorable editorial, "Light in El Salvador" (April 10, 1990, p. A20).

A Mindless Disgrace

William Worthy

As a non-joiner, had I ever made an exception and joined the 15-year-old National Association of Black Journalists, I would today steer clear of those foreign parts where American journalists are already suspected of intelligence connections.

In what the cynical French diplomat Talleyrand might have dubbed "worse than a crime; it was a mistake," the Association at last summer's convention allowed the Central Intelligence Agency to set up a recruiting booth. The price for a booth and a listing among the "Jobs Fair Recruiters" was \$750. Agents of color were in charge of the booth — of course.

It has taken considerable time to nail down the genesis of this sorry episode. It seems that the Association's apolitical staff in Reston, Virginia, hustling institutional ads and jobs-fair fees for the slick convention journal, saw nothing wrong, morally or professionally, in supping with what Lyndon Johnson once called "Murder, Incorporated."

NABJ's outgoing president, DeWayne Wickham, a Gannett News Service columnist, told the convention's business meeting — where rank-and-file outrage broke out — that he first knew of CIA participation when he saw its booth. The new president, Thomas Morgan III of the *New York Times*, told me that prior to the convention, the staff had sent out to all the officers the list of signed-up, paid-up jobs-fair recruiters, but none of the officers took time to scrutinize the names. In that sense, he said, the blame, in all fairness, does not rest solely on the staff.

The ultimate irony is that ever since the revelations of Senator Church's investigation of the CIA in the mid-1970s — describing massive media collaboration with the Agency — it is inconceivable that any white journalism organization would permit public identification with the Agency.

The repercussions of this imbroglio will continue far into the future. Formally the story ended with an exchange of polite letters between Mr. Morgan (sending back the \$750) and James W. Greeneleaf, the CIA's public affairs director, who expressed "disappointment." Just as the Devil can quote Scripture, so Greeneleaf cites Thomas Jefferson in arguing that the First Amendment prescribes "a market place for the competition of ideas. He viewed the First Amendment as robust and vigorous, not timid and uncertain.... It is well known that we routinely recruit at jobs fairs nationwide, as well as at many of this country's most prestigious colleges and universities.... In light of the very favorable response we received from your members, I would ask that the NABJ reconsider its decision to bar us from future jobs fairs.... I believe that your initial reaction in this matter does both of our organizations a disservice."

What can the NABJ members have learned? The member-

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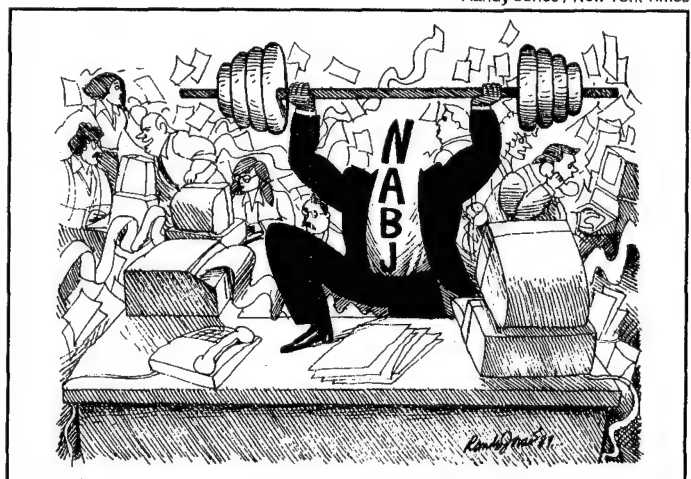
ship is, of course, a mixed bag. According to the *New York Times* (whose convention coverage never mentioned the heated controversy over the CIA's presence), Gayle Pollard, a *Los Angeles Times* editorial writer and the Association's vice-president for print, stated: "If there is one underlying theme [at the convention] it's jobs; half the people here are on the make" (August 17, 1989, p. B10). In the glorified materialism that defines our culture and permeates the air we breathe, are those careerists of color any more likely than their white brethren to focus the public's attention on the CIA's daily crimes? Will they set out to undermine popular acceptance of the CIA as just another powerful social norm? Will they reflect on what should be their roots in the famous July 4, 1852, speech by journalist and Abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who charged: "There is not a nation on earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of these United States"?

Earlier, Douglass had denounced the "disgraceful, cruel, and iniquitous [Mexican] war" and demanded "the recall of our forces." So far as I am aware, the NABJ has never followed in Douglass's footsteps by denouncing U.S. military action in Grenada, Nicaragua, or Panama, or the current maneuvers and provocations that are a clear prelude to a contrived attack on Cuba.

The Historical Antecedents

Will those NABJ members who are well paid and who partied at white-media-funded lavish social functions during the convention go back and read the uncompromising and sophisticated attacks by small, struggling minority papers on U.S. aggression at the turn of the century? Here is a sample from the remarkable collection in *The Black Press Views American Imperialism (1898-1900)*, edited by George P. Marks III (New York: Arno Press/New York Times, 1971). An editorial headline in the *Afro-American Sentinel*, July 16, 1898: "The South Needs Liberating, Not Cuba." The *Cleveland Gazette*, July 16, 1898: "United States and Spain Both Reprehensible." The *Kansas State Ledger*, July 23, 1898: "America has outgrown the Monroe Doctrine and started in the competitive colonial scheme." The *Helena, Arkansas, Reporter*, February 1, 1900: "Any Negro soldier that will cross the ocean to help subjugate the Filipinos

Randy Jones / New York Times



Times cartoon depicting "Sense of Muscle" of NABJ.

is a fool or a villain."

In a July 27, 1900, letter to the *New York Age*, Bishop Henry M. Turner of Atlanta said: "This is not our war, and the black man that puts a gun upon his shoulder to go and fight China [in the Boxer Rebellion] should find the bottom of the ocean before he gets there."

With that kind of courageous tradition behind them, NABJ members who greeted General Colin L. Powell (the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the front man for the invasion of Panama) "with pride" as a main convention speaker might, just might, have had second thoughts had they heeded the advice in a letter to the editor of the *Richmond Planet* during the Spanish-American War (July 30, 1898): "The American Negro cannot become the ally of imperialism without enslaving his own race."

There is no easy way to turn around the thinking behind the NABJ's twin abominations—consorting with the CIA and applauding Gen. Powell—"as if the oppression practiced around the world by this society is all right if the head oppressor is Black" (Clinton Cox, "Honorary White Journalists," *New York City Sun*, September 20, 1989, p. 31).

A friend who teaches journalism at a prestigious minority university cautions his students that their mass-media job opportunities are based on the hope that their presence on the scene "will quiet down those bad Negroes who are out in the street raising hell." As Brooks Adams, a philosopher of imperialism greatly admired by Theodore Roosevelt, put it in 1896: "The only question which preoccupies the ruling class is whether it is cheaper to coerce or bribe."

NABJ members who have the wisdom to think beyond their paychecks could not do better than to paraphrase that profound nonracial question of human destiny posed over a century ago by Dostoevski: "After everyone has bread [and integration and equal job opportunity], then what?" ●

Sense of Muscle?

The *New York Times* coverage of the convention devoted most space to the NABJ's "fundamental goal of increasing the employment of blacks in the nation's newsrooms, especially at the top" (August 17, 1989, p. B10). A follow-up story at the conclusion of the convention was entitled "'Sense of Muscle' for Black Journalists" (August 21, 1989, p. D1). It seemed to stress the power of the organization, while noting, "Minority groups make up about 7.5 percent of the editorial employees at American newspapers. More than half of the nation's papers have no minority employees in their newsrooms."

Ironically, when the survey of the American Society of Newspaper Editors was released six months later, it showed that minority members of the newsroom work force was only up to 7.86 percent, from 7.54 percent the year before (*New York Times*, April 4, 1990, p. A20).

Some "sense of muscle."

Times Prints PR For Coup in Argentina

Edward Newton

Imagine Klaus Barbie writing a commentary on German reunification for the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times*. Unthinkable? Perhaps not, if the *Times*'s judgment in a recent, similar circumstance is any indication.

On March 23, 1990, the *Times* ran an Op-Ed piece (p. A23) defending the political ideas of the *carapintada* movement in Argentina, a group of dissident junior military officers whose name—painted faces—refers to the combat face paint they wore during three uprisings mounted against the elected government of Raul Alfonsín in 1987 and 1988. It was written by Ernesto Barreiro, identified by the *Times* as "a leader of the *carapintada* movement, retired from the Argentine Army with the rank of major in 1987."

In the article, Barreiro expresses his desire to give the American public the *carapintada* "version of the past and our vision of the future." He then proceeds to offer a reasonable-sounding analysis of recent history and current politics in Argentina.

The Real History

At least it would sound reasonable to anyone unaware that the history is actually a collection of rightwing conspiracy theories or that the politics reflect those espoused by the military dictators of 1976-1983 to justify the murder of 30,000 citizens and the arrest and torture of many thousands more. Barreiro himself is well-documented as having tortured and murdered numerous political detainees while chief of interrogation at the La Perla concentration camp in Córdoba. His membership in several anti-Semitic groups is recognized as well.

Considering the poverty of the *Times*'s coverage of Latin America, there is little reason to expect most readers to know these details. In this case, however, the *Times* did offer part of the story. But it chose a most curious method of doing so. In an editorial on the facing page (p. A22), entitled "A Warning From Argentina," the *Times* offered a few facts: Barreiro "sparked a military mutiny in 1987 by refusing to report for trial. He had been charged with torturing detainees at an interrogation center he commanded during military rule. The mutiny won Major Barreiro, and other military defendants beneath the rank of general, immunity from human rights prosecution." The editorial goes on to warn, in the paper's customary voice of reason, that although a military presence in the government remains "unacceptable for most Argentines," the dire economic woes of the country give increasing weight to the "military fantasies" of the *carapintadas*, and to their capacity "to agitate politically."

When asked about the wisdom of giving such prominent space to an obviously discredited and potentially dangerous

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Unidentified Army officer points pistol at Noticias Argentinas reporters covering the transfer of an incarcerated rebel military leader to house arrest, December 1987.

group, a spokeswoman in the *Times's* editorial department replied that they believed their editorial provided "sufficient balance" and that to let such voices be heard was "more useful than denying they exist." Balance and free speech. Two golden tenets of journalism. How often, however, does the *Times* extend to the left the opportunities it provides to the far right? In this instance, moreover, the platitudes fail to justify the deed.

The granting of space on the Op-Ed page of one of the world's most important newspapers bestows a prestige which cannot be balanced by an editorial disclaimer, from which the article may be easily separated in subsequent reprints and citations. As for free speech, that noble idea is not served when an influential forum, widely believed to offer thoughtful and well-substantiated opinions, prints a piece despite full knowledge that it is a deceptive apologia for a hateful ideology and that the author writes out of self-serving and criminal motives. In fact, one might argue that this peculiar treatment, wherein the *Times* prints an opinion piece by one person along with its own editorial which says, in effect, "he's lying," may be accurate in this instance but sets a precedent all too easily misused to the detriment of free speech.

The proper treatment of this story would be a news article examining the efforts of the *carapintadas* to gain political power in Argentina. By attempting to redress the failings of the news division with this sordid use of the Op-Ed page, the *Times* has done a disservice to its readers and to Argentina as well.

Postscript

Perhaps in tacit recognition that they had exceeded the bounds of responsible journalism, on April 5 the *Times* ran a news story (p. A4) about the political activities of two other *carapintada* leaders, Aldo Rico and Mohamed Ali Seineldin. But the report, by the notoriously epaulet-worshipping Southern Cone correspondent Shirley Christian, offered scant improvement.

Of the 21 paragraphs, 16 were devoted to a straightforward, almost admiring presentation of their politics, while only four discussed the fact that Seineldin was serving 20 days of army detention for making implied coup threats. A lone sentence reluctantly broached the human rights issue: "The rebellious of-

ficers, mostly of middle and lower levels, were frustrated at being unappreciated and badly paid and equipped, and fearful of being tried for killings and torture of suspected leftist guerrillas in the 1970s." Note the order of importance. We may also observe that once again Christian and the *Times* use the language of the killers—suspected leftist guerrillas—although the evidence is clear that thousands of trade unionists and others in no way linked to guerrillas were murdered by the Argentine state terrorists.

The tone was augmented by the *Times's* presentation. The headline read, "An Ousted Argentine Rambo Storms the Hustings," and the accompanying large photograph showed a child kissing the cheek of a smiling Rico, whom the caption names as "a hero of Argentina's 1982 war with Britain over the Falkland Islands."

Amnesty for Torturers?

The *New York Times* editorial "The Ghost at Freedom's Party: Giving Amnesty to Terrorists and Torturers" (April 2, 1990, p. A16), while calling such amnesty unjustifiable on moral grounds, proceeds to justify it as "politically tolerable," in the case of Latin American "death squad killers and sadistic torturers," because of the "imperatives of peace." It goes on to defend such amnesties as "pragmatic bargains" in which the moral costs are "balanced against the risk that judges and juries lack the independence and heroism to convict the worst abusers."

But the pragmatic bargains were imposed as a non-negotiable condition and were a form of blackmail by these state terrorists. The official U.S. position is not to bargain with terrorists, in order not to encourage more of the same, and yet there is ample evidence that placing military forces above the law is interpreted by them as tacit acceptance of their methods.

A recent report by the U.N. Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances states, "Perhaps the most important factor contributing to the phenomenon of disappearances may be that of impunity." The Working Group believes its ten years of experience have confirmed the age-old adage that "impunity breeds contempt for the law."

Moreover, the victims of torture and the population at large were not consulted in the bargaining negotiations between the leaders of the military regimes and amenable civilian élites. These regimes committed crimes against society, and society should have the opportunity to judge them. A government issuing unilateral or coerced amnesties or pardons faces the risk of mass cynicism toward democracy and the rule of law. Justice is perceived as the province of the few and democracy as rewarding those who had terrorized the population for the state.

Finally, to balance morality against the independence or courage of judges and juries, as the *Times* suggests, misses the point. If they cannot convict criminals, in what sense has democracy been restored? And if the military forces are a powerful caste above the law, do they not remain as an imminent threat, especially in a constrained democracy?

— Patti McSherry

Pack Pluralism

Michael Parenti

It was back on January 20, a cold, drizzly, Saturday afternoon in Washington, D.C. Sitting in my living room, I decided to take full advantage of the freedom we Americans are said to enjoy. I decided to watch some public affairs programs on television. But which ones? With so much freedom and diversity, it is not always easy to choose. I had heard about people from communist countries coming here and being overwhelmed by the array of choices.

I checked the "Public Affairs" TV listing, and the choice was overwhelming in its own way. There was a PBS program called "American Interests," and its guest was Henry Kissinger. It had been quite some time since I had last seen Henry Kissinger holding forth on television—maybe a good 48 hours. Kissinger was slated to talk about "Great Power Politics in the 1990s." The 1990s were only 20 days old, so I figured he couldn't have all that much to say. I decided to take a rain check, secure in the knowledge that I could catch Henry whenever I wanted.

The next offering was "Evans and Novak" on CNN. Those two conservative syndicated columnists were interviewing the conservative Republican Senator Robert Dole. Here was a spectrum of opinion that went from far-right to moderately far-right. It would be interesting to see how the three of them would use the program as a vehicle for the political pluralism and diversity for which we have recently become so renowned among Eastern Europeans. A few years ago, I was a guest on "Crossfire" when Robert Novak was serving as host. He never let me finish a sentence in what turned out to be a half-hour screaming match. I suspected that Evans and Novak would let Dole finish his sentences—which was enough reason for me to flip the dial.

An hour later, CNN offered "Newsmaker Saturday." The guests were Zbigniew Brzezinski, former national security adviser and full-time Cold War Russophobe, and Jeane Kirkpatrick, Third World interventionist and authoritarian admirer. Kirkpatrick has not been saying much lately about how communist governments will never give up their monopoly on power because they are immutably totalitarian, but she has been busy defending with renewed vigor the violent repression in El Sal-

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vador. Brzezinski and Kirkpatrick were going to talk about "Internal Soviet Violence: What Does it Mean?" I decided not to risk exposure to either of them.

Getting on in the day, CBS was offering "Inside Washington." No guest experts were listed, just a panel of TV news analysts who were scheduled to discuss "D.C. Mayor Marion Barry's drug arrest and ongoing civil unrest in the Soviet Union." This listing seemed to imply that there was a connection between these two subjects. But I knew there wasn't, so I skipped the show.

Playing against CBS—and this is what we mean by choice—was CNN's "Capital Gang." This show turned out to be a panel of news pundits who talked about "D.C. Mayor Barry's arrest and internal violence in Soviet Azerbaijan." For an additional dollop of diversity, the guest was conservative Republican Senator Orrin Hatch, whom I hadn't laid eyes on since a MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour interview a week before. I passed.

Playing against both CBS and CNN was still more diversity: "The McLaughlin Group," an NBC program headed by a right-wing *National Review* editor. This was just one of several shows that McLaughlin habituated. It offered the usual format: three loud, aggressive rightwingers (counting McLaughlin, the panel "moderator") would shout out two relatively milder and more polite centrists in what purported to be a political "discussion." The listed topics were—you got it: "The arrest of D.C. Mayor Barry and civil war in Azerbaijan." But talk about diversity, there was a third topic: "Bush's approval rating." I decided I would view a show about Bush's approval rating only when that rating began to drop drastically. Anyway, watching McLaughlin is a little like getting mauled in an alley. Thanks to my remote control zapper, I quickly escaped his clutches.

Finally there came "Journalists' Roundtable" on C-SPAN. Another group of pundits was going to talk about: "Unrest in the Soviet Union, the arrest of D.C. Mayor Barry, and a review of Bush's first year in office."

There you have it: the entire TV public affairs programming for January 20, 1990, in the capital of our great democracy. The only thing missing was Elliott Abrams. By the end of the day, I concluded that two sides of a story are not *all* sides of a story. I gave up on public affairs television that evening and have not returned to it since.

Not long ago, I happened to be interviewed by a Bulgarian political scientist. He was in Washington doing research on how the U.S. government worked. He remarked that America was the oldest democracy in the world, and he looked forward to the day when public discourse in his own country could be as open and varied as in our country. Oh, I thought to myself, he should wish for more than that, much more.

Shia, Impact Visuals



Shia, Impact Visuals



Wide World Photos



Casolo Case Update

Richard McKerrow

A *LOOT* reader, Rich Ailes, writes from Chester, Pennsylvania, that the *New York Times* made "no editorial deletions" in Jason DeParle's story about Jennifer Casolo's speech at Riverside Church in New York City (see *LOOT*, March 1990, p. 5). Ailes was reading the paper's early edition which, with a total circulation of 195,000 and distribution in selected areas of the northeast corridor, serves as a kind of journalistic dress rehearsal. The late edition, from which Casolo's account of hearing people tortured was removed, has three times the readers of the early edition and is the definitive edition, the one represented in the official *Times* index. It hits the stands in New York, replacing the early edition, at around 5:30 a.m., and is the basis for the national edition sold on the West Coast. Obtaining a back copy of the early paper in New York is not an easy task: The people at the *Times* say they cannot provide it; public libraries do not stock it; and University Microfilm Inc., which copies the *Times* for posterity, preserves only the late edition. So Casolo's testimony of torture has been effectively obliterated from the *Times*'s historical record.

As I reported in March, an individual at the *Times* believes that Casolo's remarks were edited out for reasons of space. Crowding the late edition was news that President Alfredo Cristiani had identified "some elements of the armed forces" as responsible for killing the Jesuits. Faced with quoting the President of El Salvador distancing himself from these "elements" or a female church worker talking about U.S.-funded violence, the editors, their reflexes conditioned by long practice, made the predictable choice.

The *Times* persists in portraying Cristiani as an ambassador of peace. In an April 10 editorial, "Light in El Salvador," Cristiani is described as having "defied the zealots in his own rightist camp" by "bravely" pressing "charges against the presumed terrorists and some military superiors" responsible for slaughtering the priests, their housekeeper, and her daughter. In fact, as a memorandum prepared by the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights reveals, investigators have carefully avoided the pursuit of information that might expose the involvement of leading government officials. "In El Salvador," the memo notes, "the possibility that the colonel [Guillermo Benavides] ... will ever even be tried is considered remote."

For the *Times*, which regards the prosecution against the killers as proceeding satisfactorily, continued aid to the Salvadoran regime is now linked to elections. The *Times*'s editorial articulates the U.S. administration's latest ploy: "The U.S. Congress ... can condition its next payment on electoral reforms." Here we have a newspaper that for years has informed us about the freeness and fairness of elections in El Salvador suddenly calling for electoral reform. It would seem the *Times* cannot even remember its own lines.

Richard McKerrow is a British freelance journalist.

Wide World Photos



Casolo is hauled away by women and men from the Panther Battalion of the National Police. She told *LOOT* that "women were chosen because they knew the press would be there. Women were supposed to look less threatening."

The *Times* (April 14, p. A2) would still have us believe that the atrocities exacted upon Salvadorans is the work of death squads which, while linked to the military, are essentially rogue elements. Clifford Krauss wrote, "Officials in Washington and El Salvador are nearly unanimous in saying that the killings were the work of a rightwing death squad tied to the military." The truth is that the priests were executed by members of the Salvadoran Army's Atlacatl Battalion, trained and funded by the United States, and their murder was celebrated that afternoon by a First Brigade sound truck which passed the Archdiocese announcing, "Ellacuria and Martín Baro have fallen. We are going to continue killing communists." In a letter dated April 20 to Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, the Lawyers Committee wrote: "According to a member of the Atlacatl commando unit ... in the days immediately preceding the killing of the Jesuits, the Atlacatl commandoes ... were being trained by 'Americans.'"

Editors at the *Times* should order their correspondent Lindsey Gruson to visit a woman named Tonita who now lives in a refugee camp on the outskirts of San Salvador. One day two years ago, she left her three children in the care of her mother and sister while she took lunch to her husband. Tonita returned to find that "the decapitated heads of all five had been placed in front of each torso, their hands arranged on top, as if each body was stroking its own head. This had proven difficult in the case of the youngest daughter. The difficulty had been overcome by nailing the hands onto the head.... In the very center of the table was a large plastic bowl filled with blood; the air hung heavy with its sweet, cloying smell." Daniel Santiago, who recounted this in the Jesuit magazine *America* (March 24), reports that this was the work of the National Guard, not a "government-linked" death squad. People like Tonita should be quoted in the *Times*, and not just in the early edition, but the late, which, according to Anthony Sprauve at the *Times*, is "the final edition of record."

The Press and the Green Berets

Dave Lindorff

A number of confidential documents recently obtained through the Freedom of Information Act show the Pentagon to have a pretty low opinion of the nation's press when it comes to exposing America's war machine in action — a low opinion that was borne out by mainstream press coverage of the Salvadoran guerrilla takeover in November of the San Salvador Sheraton Hotel's VIP annex.

There was always a certain comic aspect to this incident: a group of presumably top-flight, allegedly battle-ready American Green Berets caught in their luxury digs in San Salvador's poshest hotel by a ragtag group of FMLN rebels.

The Pentagon documents, dating back to mid-October, a month before the Faribundo Martí National Liberation Front uprising, are a series of Defense Department public information strategy papers for dealing with unwanted press inquiries about three secret Green Beret missions to El Salvador — missions that appear to violate a congressional limit of 55 military advisers in El Salvador.

They are in the form of hypothetical press questions and Pentagon answers to those questions. The Pentagon need not have bothered; most of the questions it worried about were never even asked by a docile press in San Salvador and Washington.

The first document, "Proposed Public Affairs Guidance for DFT-SF-033 (an apparent reference to Delta Force troops, Special Forces) to El Salvador," poses the question: "Would you characterize these personnel as advisers to the El Salvadoran Armed Forces?" The initial answer proposed is: "No. They are here only to participate in U.S. unilateral training and combined short-term exercises."

A week later, a revised version of the document pointedly deletes the reference to "combined short-term exercises," which after all might logically be construed as the kind of thing advisers might engage in.

Equally significant, the first document in October poses this hypothetical question: "Will U.S. forces be given more sophisticated weapons as part of this training exercise?" The initial answer proposed is: "This mission is a training exercise. It does not involve the use of weapons, other than TOE weapons."

But in the revision a week later, the reference to TOE weapons is axed. Why? TOE stands for "Table of Equipment" weapons, which according to a Pentagon official means "Whatever is appropriate to the mission." Since Green Beret Special Forces missions can, by definition, be almost anything imaginable, in this case TOE could mean anything from anti-tank weapons to plastique explosives.

Dave Lindorff is a freelance writer specializing in economics and politics. He is currently teaching journalism at Alfred University.

Perhaps the biggest obfuscation involved numbers of troops. The initial document, drawn up before the rebel uprising and capture of the Green Berets, refers to plans to send "three groups of (12) U.S. personnel" to El Salvador "to exercise with the Salvador Armed Forces." By the third revision, drawn up after the second contingent of troops was caught in the Sheraton, the answer to the hypothetical press inquiry: "Who were the U.S. personnel in the Sheraton Hotel who came out this morning?" is a simple: "They were 12 U.S. Army personnel on a routine training mission to El Salvador and were awaiting transportation back to the U.S. when the hotel was attacked."

The document continues with another paragraph under the heading "(If Pressed)," thus: "The group was one of two [sic] groups, of 12 to 15 U.S. military personnel each, from the 7th Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, who were training in Salvador. Training for the two groups was scheduled from October 30th through November 21st."

This, of course, was a lie. The initial document clearly refers to plans for three groups to be in El Salvador through December 1. The last group was either canceled after disclosure of the second or is to remain a secret unless similarly embarrassed.

In any event, the Pentagon flacks need not have worried so much about the press, in San Salvador or Washington. Lindsey Gruson's story in the *New York Times* (November 22, 1989, p. A1) ran the Pentagon line exactly as it was offered in the sanitized last version of the Pentagon strategy documents. Reporter Robert Pear, writing for the *Times* from Washington (p. A10), even mentioned the 55-adviser limit in his story on the hotel incident the same day without bothering to ask whether the captured Green Berets were considered in violation of that limit. He too ran the Pentagon line. Neither reporter even got to the Pentagon's "(If Pressed)" answer, and thus never mentioned, in any of their stories, other Green Beret missions to El Salvador. •

Close to Her Heart

Catherine Saalfeld

The *New York Times* has a track record of misrepresenting the sexual preference of victims of murder and other violent crimes. Their editorial mishaps, however, reflect not only heterosexual assumptions but also outright denial and utter confusion about the often quite "regular" lives of gay and lesbian people. While the *Times* claims to treat sexual preference — when reporting on violent crime — in the same way as race or religion ("only if pertinent to the story"), even their writers have admitted to a homophobic double standard.

For example, compare the following coverage in the *Times* with that of *New York Newsday*. Both dailies reported on March 15, 1990, the death of Loretta Rivera, killed by a stray bullet in Brooklyn the day before. *Newsday* treated the story in the most

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run-of-the-mill human-interest light, reprinting a photograph found in Rivera's jacket near the bullet wound, of her and her girlfriend, Liz Melendez. It quoted a recent love letter from Rivera to Melendez in prison: "We have our future. It's on hold 'til you get home. But baby it will be worth it."

First, the Times called Liz Melendez's girlfriend "her boyfriend." When pressed, they published a correction and said she was her "companion."

The *Times*, however, reported that Rivera's "boyfriend" was serving time, and misquoted Rivera's roommate (who was walking home with her when she was shot) saying, "She said she wanted them close to her heart" (p. B5). In *Newsday* the quote read, "[Rivera] always kept [the photograph] in her shirt pocket because she wanted Liz to be forever close to her heart" (p. 29). According to a follow-up story in *Newsday* about the *Times*'s bias, "James McKinley, author of the *Times* story, said, 'The policy of the *Times* is not to refer to sexual orientation in news items. In this case we decided her sexual orientation had nothing to do with her death. I wrote that she had a picture of her lover; a student copy editor changed it to *boyfriend*'" (*New York Newsday*, March 21, 1990, p. 11).

Although the *Times* had stated they would not print a retraction, and the secretary at the metropolitan office claimed that they had to "see what the family wants done," the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) pressured them, and a correction appeared on March 20. They identified Liz Melendez as Rivera's "companion" (*New York Times*, March 20, 1990, p. A3).

According to Karin Schwartz, the assistant director of GLAAD, McKinley admitted there is a problem because the policy is never questioned and "heterosexual editorial bias" prevails. In fact, this incident did not occur in a vacuum. When James Zappalorti was brutally murdered on Staten Island two months ago, the *Times* was the only paper to manipulate the father's quotes in such a way that he denied his son was gay. In the other papers, his father is quoted as saying, "He was gay but he was a good gay. He was not a pervert." The *Times* alleged that the father said, "He wasn't gay. He wasn't a pervert."

The *Times* continues to ignore requests from GLAAD to resolve the issue, as evidenced in the April 17 reporting of Gregory Kolovakos's death. The report ends, "There are no known survivors," yet on the same page is a paid obituary which mentions Kolovakos's "long time companion Bruce Becker" (*New York Times*, April 17, 1990, p. B12).

Schwartz says, "The *New York Times* has come a long way in recognizing on the obituary pages the surviving life partners of gay men and lesbians who have died. That said, their current policy is useless if it is not accompanied by a serious attempt to determine the facts." The phrase "no known survivors" cannot be believed when it is read in the obituaries of gay or lesbian people. We are everywhere, and the *Times* must acknowledge that when reporting the "facts."

Odds and Ends

It's All In the Eye of the Beholder

Many *LOOT* articles have presented examples of the varied ways in which the *New York Times* manipulates its readers' opinions, not by overt lying, but by placement, size, repetition, omission, and other such means. In this issue, for example, we note how the report of a U.S. Coast Guard attack on an unarmed Cuban freighter was relegated to a few column inches at the bottom of an inside page. The same article points out how the *Times*'s campaign against Cuba was waged through nearly daily negative stories with loaded words in the headlines, and how positive news about Cuba was totally ignored ("The *Times*'s Relentless Assaults on Cuba," p. 11).

It seems that *Times* reporters can be a bit more perspicacious on the inside looking out than vice-versa. A good case in point is "Gorbachev Calls Lithuania's Move An 'Alarming' Step," by Esther B. Fein (March 13, 1990, pp. A1, A16). Halfway through the article, Fein comments on the Soviet press coverage of Lithuania's declaration of independence:

There was scarcely any mention today of Lithuania's decision in the Soviet press. The few accounts were straightforward, brief, and without commentary. *Pravda*, the Communist party newspaper, buried five paragraphs from the official news agency Tass in a lower corner of an inside page. The Government newspaper *Izvestia* ran a slightly longer article that was equally inconspicuous.

"In a lower corner of an inside page." My goodness. And how surprising that there is something slightly unseemly about a news report being "straightforward" and "without commentary."

Another example of this tunnel vision can be found in Nicholas D. Kristof's "Beijing Journal" of April 12, 1990, "Painting America: The Unbeautiful and Damned" (p. A4). Kristof waxes indignant over a stream of articles in the Chinese press which insinuate that the United States might have some problems with murder, drugs, gambling, child labor, and other such phantasms. "News coverage in China," he writes, "as in other communist countries, is intended not so much to open minds as to shape them." Glory be! Are we lucky the *New York Times* has no axes to grind.

Apparently, the Chinese press has also carried a number of articles critical of U.S. foreign adventures — invading Panama, beaming TV Martí to Cuba, and the like. Kristof laments:

By printing a stream of such articles, the press conveys the impression that all the world regards the United States as a bully.

Thanks for reminding us why we publish this magazine.

— Ellen Ray and William H. Schaap

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The Wembly Concert: Untouched by U.S. Eyes

The readers of the *New York Times* (April 17, 1990, p. A3) were told that more than 60 countries, with a potential audience of one billion people, broadcast the April 16 Nelson Mandela tribute concert at London's Wembly Stadium, below, attended by more than 70,000 people. World class stars including Tracy Chapman, Peter Gabriel, Bonnie Raitt, Neil Young, the Neville Brothers, Little Steven, and Hugh Masekela performed, and Mandela delivered a "rousing" half-hour speech. The *Times* also noted that, "in accordance with the African National Congress's call to maintain sanctions, the con-

cert was not broadcast in South Africa."

What the *Times* failed to point out was that *not one* broadcast outlet in the United States chose to carry the concert, effectively censoring for Americans Mandela's critical address to the world. According to *Variety* (April 11, 1990, p. 77), the show was not sold here because of "a short window," that is, *only* six weeks between the time the show was fully planned and its occurrence. Of course, this did not hinder the 60 countries which did purchase broadcast rights, and in fact, as the *Philadelphia Inquirer* more honestly reported (April 17, 1990, p. 1C), "No American television network purchased rights to broadcast the concert, reportedly because of concerns over its political nature."

This censorship was first reported by the public television news magazine show, "South Africa Now," which faxed the information to the *Times*, to no avail. ●

International Defense and Aid Fund



The April 16 Nelson Mandela tribute concert at London's Wembly Stadium.

Lies Of Our Times

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SECOND CLASS